

# The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

" . . . The less we concentrate on worship, especially from Saturday evening until the consistory enters, the more quickly the dew of heaven will run off our hard and dry hearts . . . . Failure to prepare is what makes us most dissatisfied with our worship as we have it now . . . . Instead of being spectators, or coming for sport, come to church next Lord's Day with a heart that longs and thirsts for the Water of Life."

See "Participants — Not Spectators" —

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## THE STANDARD BEARER

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## MEDITATION

## Entering God's House

Rev. H. Veldman

*"Neither shall evil dwell with Thee . . . But as for me, I will come into Thy house in the multitude of Thy mercy."*

*Ps. 5:4b, 7a*

The Word of God, Scripture, is absolute, either-or.

This is true, generally. In Scripture we are either in light or in darkness, speak either the truth or the lie, are either in life or in death. The Word of God knows of no compromise, nothing in-between; it

is either-or. We are either wise or foolish, haters of God or lovers of Him; we seek either the things that are above or the things that are below. We are saved by grace, never out of works; we love and serve the Lord and hate Mammon and the devil, or we love and serve Mammon and the devil and we



hate the Lord. The Word of God, Scripture, is exclusively absolute, never relative.

How true this is, too, in this psalm! Indeed, the Lord is not a God that has pleasure in wickedness, evil shall not dwell with Him. The foolish shall not stand in God's sight; the Lord hates all workers of iniquity. Indeed, "Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: the Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man. *But* (and let us by all means notice this absolute contrast) as for me, I will come into Thy house in the multitude of Thy mercy." Indeed, the Word of God is absolute, full of contrasts; there is nothing relative, nothing in-between; it is all either-or.

"I will come into Thy house." Is there anything more wonderful, more glorious, of greater significance for the child of God than this coming into God's house? The Lord, Who is a light and in Whom is no darkness, is the lo and eternal God, in Himself the All-Sufficient, eternally blessed God, Whom to know is everlasting life. To come into His House, to be inducted into His covenant fellowship, to live and dwell underneath His roof, to walk and to talk with Him, to sing His praises and speak of His wonderful goodness and perfection — all this will satisfy us, forever and completely. And all this becomes increasingly wonderful because, denied sovereignly to others, it is bestowed sovereignly upon me.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### The House of the Lord.

This house, according to Scripture, must not be identified with anything that is external. *The* house of Jehovah, as in the old dispensation, did not consist in the outward temple. It is true that that temple, with all that characterized it, was a symbol of this scriptural idea. That everything was underneath one roof, the golden candlestick, the altar of incense, and the ark of the covenant with its mercy seat, was surely a beautiful symbol of the fact that the Lord dwelled with His people. And this temple in the old dispensation was God's temple, His work. This appears from the oft-repeated refrain in the Old Testament, "as the Lord commanded Moses." Besides, although this temple must not be identified with *the* house of the Lord, also in the old dispensation, nevertheless God's temple, also then, was inseparably connected with it, so that the Lord actually dwelt with His people, had fellowship with them in direct connection with this building on Mount Moriah. However, that we must not identify *the* house of the Lord with Solomon's temple on Mt. Moriah is also evident in the words of this text, inasmuch as we read that "evil shall not dwell with Thee." And we may certainly believe that the people of God in the old dispensation surely under-

stood this truth. They knew that to dwell with the Lord is purely spiritual.

This is applicable to the New Testament reality. The house of God does not consist in church buildings. There are, of course, church buildings. And they are necessary. The idea of God's house, however, is far deeper and more profound.

The idea of God's house, never to be understood merely outwardly, is exclusively spiritual. This expression refers to God's fellowship with His people in His everlasting covenant. To be with the Lord in His house, to dwell with Him, refers to that wonderful communion with the alone blessed God. We must never confuse a being with God with a dwelling with Him. The Lord is everywhere. In that sense all men are with God. In Him all men move, live, and have their being. But to dwell with Him is something so radically different. God's covenant fellowship, we understand, is not bound to time or place. This fellowship, this dwelling with Jehovah, is a fellowship of love, is the tasting of His faithfulness. It means that we are the object of His favour, that we experience His life, His light and holiness, and taste His wonderful, unfathomable love. Under the preaching of the gospel, in prayer and the reading of the scriptures, in exercising the fellowship of the saints, the child of God dwells with the Lord, experiences His fellowship. Indeed, this we experience in this life only in principle. Here we have only a foretaste of that everlasting Sabbath of our God. Presently this perfect communion will be realized. Heaven is the everlasting and full realization of communion with God. That will be glory indeed.

Now we also understand what the psalmist means when he speaks of coming into God's house. This, too, is not merely something in the external sense. A black garment, the eye fixed earthward, a long face, a pious talk — these do not lead anyone into the house of God as held before us in this particular word of God. Shall the bride of our Lord Jesus Christ be clothed with a black garment, walk pessimistically and in doubt? This activity of entering into the house of the Lord is exclusively spiritual. To enter into God's house, into His fellowship, occurs only when sin is confessed and forsaken, when we put off the old man with all his sins, when we approach unto the Lord in faith, seeking and desiring Him and serving Him in spirit and truth. Indeed, it is this to which the psalmist refers in Psalm 42:1-2: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God." Or, as we read in Psalm 84:10: "I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." To enter into the house



of the Lord, to experience His love and mercy, is more, infinitely more, than all the riches and pleasures of this world.

\* \* \* \* \*

To enter into the house of the Lord — how impossible this is for the natural man, the man apart from regenerating and saving grace!

The English reads, "Evil shall not dwell with Thee." The Dutch version reads, "The evil one shall not dwell with Thee." There is principally no difference between these translations. We prefer the English version. All evil, impurity, hatred, and enmity, seeking of self, etc., shall not dwell with the Lord, can never experience the Lord's approval and communion. Hence, because of this, the evil one who performs these things shall never dwell with God in His house, experience His fellowship.

He shall not enter into God's house. Of course he does not will or desire to enter God's house. Loving and performing evil, he has no desire for the fellowship of the Lord. To praise the Lord, to experience His love and favor, does not interest him. However, he also may not enter the Lord's house. To dwell with God is forbidden him. He may not serve and praise Jehovah. This spiritual freedom is denied him. It may not be given him because of God's justice. He deserves to be banished from God's presence. To dwell with the Lord is for him an everlasting impossibility. How this is emphasized here in Psalm 5! The Lord hates all the workers of iniquity. The foolish shall not stand in God's sight. The Lord shall destroy them that speak leasing; He abhors the bloody and deceitful man. And do not say now that the psalmist here is speaking of some special sinners. Fact is, all men have departed from the Lord. This is also emphasized in Romans 3.

That evil and the evil one shall not dwell with the Lord is because he must deal with God. God is absolutely perfect, holy, and righteous, eternally maintaining Himself. God, the alone and thrice Holy One, can exercise fellowship only with those who are like unto Him, who are holy even as He is holy. For the wicked He is a consuming fire.

Indeed, to dwell in the house of the Lord is possible only in the way of the multitude of His mercy. The evil one shall not enter God's house. But, and this we read emphatically in this text, as for me, I will surely enter.

Only, I will enter God's house in the multitude of God's mercy. God's mercy is a virtue of the Lord's everlasting love to His own, reveals itself as the Lord's great desire to save His people out of the great misery of their sin and death. This word emphasizes our misery, all our sin and evil, and the desire of our God to redeem and save His own. This

mercy of the Lord, we understand, is not merely an idle wish, but a divine desire that actually redeems and saves.

This mercy of Jehovah is an eternal mercy. The Lord willed a people in Christ Jesus from before the foundations of the world. And in time, in Jesus Christ our Lord, the redemption of God's people is historically realized. It was Jesus Christ, Immanuel, enabled and strengthened by the mercy of God, Who descended into the bottomless pit of our unfathomable misery, Who paid for all our sins and guilt, Who satisfied all the righteousness of God, through Whose blood the legal basis was laid for our dwelling with the Lord. And it is only out of that Lord Jesus Christ, as the glorified Head of Zion, that this mercy of God is also poured out into us, God's people, delivering us in principle out of all the evil of our sin, giving us the blessed consciousness of the forgiveness of all our sin.

And what a multitude of mercy! The psalmist speaks of a tremendous mercy, a mercy which is unspeakably rich. Indeed, this is a mercy which wipes out all our guilt, which carried away the infinite wrath of God, which was sufficient to merit everlasting obedience for all the people of God, and that in the heavenly glory of God's everlasting covenant. Indeed, we may well sing of the everlasting mercies of our God. We can surely understand why the inspired writer of these words in Psalm 5 writes that we enter into the house of our God in the multitude of His mercy.

But then it is also plain how the people of the Lord enter this wonderful house of God. The child of God is no longer evil in principle. We enter only in that principle. Only when we stand in that principle do we experience fellowship with Jehovah. All our evil has been atoned. In Christ Jesus we have access unto the throne of God's grace, because of the greatness of the mercy of our God. When we trust in God's mercy, when all our confidence is in the work of our Lord, then we can and will dwell with our God, now in principle, tasting His amazing love and assured of His fellowship, and presently forever.

We shall enter into God's house.

Only in and because of the multitude of God's mercy.

To God alone be all the glory, now and forever.

*The Standard Bearer  
makes a thoughtful gift  
for the sick and shut-in.*



## Editor's Notes

Your editor is taking a vacation in this issue. That gives him a break, and it also makes room for some copy which has been waiting to be published.

\* \* \* \* \*

This is the last issue of Volume 61. You will find the annual index in this issue. All of which reminds me that we are still waiting for the projected master index of all the volumes, going back to Volume 1. When is it coming, brethren?

\* \* \* \* \*

There will be some significant changes in Volume 62. These will be announced in the October 1 issue. But these changes will also involve an *end* for some departments and their writers. The last meditation from the pen of Rev. Herman

Veldman appears in this issue. The Rev. Veldman has been writing for our magazine for many years, and he has always been a willing and dependable contributor. We take this opportunity to thank him for his labors. I may add that he will continue to share the department *Taking Heed To The Doctrine*. The Rev. Van Baren contributes his last article for *All Around Us* in this issue; he will have a new department in Vol. 62. Prof. Decker has made his last contribution to *The Lord Gave The Word*, and this department will be replaced. And Prof. Hanko will soon conclude his *My Sheep Hear My Voice* and will then have a new department. Yes, I'm holding out on you; watch the next issue for the new departments.

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## MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

## Our Order of Worship

Prof. H. Hanko

In the last few articles we have been discussing those parts of the worship service in which the minister functions both as the ambassador of God, speaking in God's name to the congregation, and as the mouthpiece of the people, speaking to God in the people's name. Specifically, to the former belong the salutation, the benedictions, the reading of the law, the preaching. To the latter belong the vatum — "Our help is in the name of Jehovah . . .," the reading of the Apostolic Confession (when the congregation does not speak it with the minister), the prayers.

With the exception of the prayers and the sermon, we have discussed all these elements, and we now turn to these last two.

In the course of our articles on worship we have always first examined the question, whether the elements of the worship service which we were dis-

cussing have Scriptural warrant. We must face this question now also as we discuss the prayers which are offered in the worship service.

That Scripture binds us to the use of prayers in the worship service can hardly be questioned. It is simply incredible that anyone would ever want to eliminate prayers from the worship service. After all, an important part of worship in any sense is prayer, and the Sabbath services are preeminently worship.

Nevertheless, Scripture speaks often of this. When Solomon was dedicating the temple he prayed a long and beautiful prayer — a prayer, by the way, which was really an intercessory prayer in his role as type of Christ. He made prayer an important part of the dedication of the temple of God. But in the course of his prayer he also speaks of the children of Israel using the temple for a house of



prayer. In I Kings 8:38, 39 we have these words of Solomon: "What prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands toward this house: then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place . . ."

Isaiah calls the temple a house of prayer in 56:7: "Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people."

To these words of Isaiah the Lord referred more than once in his earthly ministry. In Mark 11:17, after the cleansing of the temple, the Lord said, "Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves." This is repeated in Luke 19:46.

Regular prayers were also made in the temple at given hours. E.g., we read in Acts 3:1: "Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour."

From these passages it is clear that prayer was, and is, an important part of worship. Without such prayers worship is not complete. It is through prayer that God's people speak to God in covenant fellowship.

There are several points concerning prayers in public worship to which we must call attention.

In the first place, the question arises, how many prayers ought to be made, and when in the worship order is it best to make them. In our churches there are usually individual prayers by the members of the congregation, either when they first sit in their pews or when the worship service is about to begin. We have discussed this in an earlier article. There is also the so-called congregational prayer, usually around ten minutes long, which is made after the singing of a couple of *Psalter* numbers and the reading of the law or the recitation of the Apostles' Creed. Finally, a brief prayer is offered immediately after the sermon and before the final *Psalter* number, doxology, and benediction. On this point there has been a great deal of variation in Reformed Churches and freedom must be allowed to each congregation in this matter. Surely, no set rules can be made.

In the second place, the question has sometimes been asked, whether free prayers or form prayers are to be used. Free prayers differ from form prayers in this respect that the latter are written prayers while the former are extemporaneous. Especially in Anglican circles after the Reformation, form prayers were almost exclusively used, and when, with the Puritan reaction, free prayers

were introduced into some worship services, this was vehemently protested. In churches with high liturgy, form prayers are customary, while in churches which do not put much emphasis on liturgical activities, free prayers are usually used. In fact, in many churches form prayers are considered to be entirely out of place. Free prayers are considered the only legitimate kind.

Here too there must be freedom. In our own churches both are used. In the Liturgical Forms used at the administration of baptism and the Lord's Supper, form prayers are used because they are a part of the forms. And it is well to remind ourselves that these form prayers must be used as they appear in the Forms. It is not proper to change these prayers, introduce into them extemporaneous elements, or depart from the wording which appears in them. These Forms have been adopted by the churches and they must be used as adopted, unless changed by the churches in common. One of the issues at the time of the *Afscheiding* in 1834 was precisely this. There were ministers in the State Church who were altering the Forms, dropping them entirely in favor of their own Forms, using the adopted Forms only in part, or tampering with them in other ways. The fathers of the *Afscheiding* objected to all this and returned to the old Forms which had been adopted by the Synod of Dordrecht, 1618-'19.

But, while in our Forms form prayers are used, the other prayers in the worship service are free prayers. It would not in itself be wrong in the worship services to use form prayers, but free prayers are to be preferred. They give the minister opportunity to bring before the Lord the specific needs of the congregation as these needs vary with the circumstances in which the congregation finds itself. And with the use of free prayers, the congregation can much more easily involve itself in the prayers which the minister makes.

In the third place, the question has been raised in the history of the Reformed churches whether confession of sin and absolution ought to be a part of the congregational prayers. Some, including Calvin, have devoted a separate part of the worship service to this. In various ways the congregation is brought to confess her sins before God and seek forgiveness at God's hand through the blood of Jesus Christ. In some instances, the minister himself pronounced absolution upon the people, not in the sense of the Roman Catholics who have wrongly and very evilly claimed the power of forgiveness for priests so that priests have the judicial power to forgive sins in themselves; but in the sense of the minister, speaking authoritatively in the name of Christ, assuring the congregation of God's forgiveness.



Here again no specific rules can be laid down. There is, however, a principle involved here which ought not to be ignored. God's people are called to come before the face of God in humility, with a broken spirit and a contrite heart, which the Lord will not despise. In fact the broken spirit and contrite heart which Scripture requires of all those who come to God is exactly contrasted with lip service and outward formalism. This humility arises out of the consciousness of sin and is essential in the worship service. In other words, there must be opportunity in the worship service somewhere for God's people to confess their sins and so enter God's presence in humility of heart and mind. If no separate part of the worship service is devoted to this, it ought to be present in the congregational prayers. But it is exactly because God's people must come before the Lord in such humility that I have long favored a short prayer very near the beginning of the worship service which includes such a prayer for forgiveness and plea for the assurance that our sins are pardoned in the blood of Christ.

In the fourth place, the matter of posture in prayer has often been discussed. Usually in our churches the congregation remains seated during prayer. But this has not always been so. I recall when I was a youth that the Consistory stood during congregational prayers, though the congregation remained seated. In other circles, e.g., among the German Reformed, it was customary for the entire congregation to stand. It is also possible to

kneel during congregational prayers, although this would require some alterations in our seats or pews: kneeling benches would have to be built in. Yet we might be surprised to learn that this was the posture which Calvin favored. In discussing proper spiritual decorum in the house of God, Calvin writes that part of such decorum is "that we pray with bended knees" (*Institutes*, IV, x, 29). This is discussed a bit more in detail in the following paragraph where he discusses the fundamental truth that all elements included in the worship services must have the authority of God.

Let us take, as an example, the kneeling practised during solemn prayers. The question is, whether it be a human tradition, which every one is at liberty to reject or neglect. I answer that it is at once both human and Divine. It is of God, as it forms a branch of that decorum which is recommended to our attention and observance by the apostle; it is of men, as it particularly designates that which had in general been rather hinted than clearly expressed.

From this it is clear that here too we have a matter in which the church must exercise her God-given liberty to do all things in such a way that they are to God's glory and to the edification of the church.

We must still talk about the contents of congregational prayers, but this shall have to wait until our next article.

## THE DAY OF SHADOWS

# Faithfulness That Never Fails

Rev. John A. Heys

It ought not go unnoticed that the book of Esther begins with a feast and ends with a feast. The book opens with the account of a feast of Ahasuerus. The feast of the enlarged and delivered Jews is presented to us in the closing verses of the book.

However, although we have in these passages feasts of two very distinctly different groups of people, they are feasts that have one significant element in common. Both are carnal, worldly feasts or banquets that revolve around fleshly gladness and

are conducted with no thought of the God of heaven and earth, Who gives life, earthly possessions, food and drink, and deliverance from dangerous situations.

It is to be expected in the day of shadows that worldly kingdom's such as that of the Medes and the Persians will feast and revel in things without praise to God and with taking His name in vain, if it indeed does fall from their lips. One would also expect the Jews of that day to have all their celebra-



tions revolve around the God of our salvation by singing His praises, calling attention to His covenant faithfulness, and telling the generations that follow of His power and goodness. But in vain you look for one word that would even suggest that Mordecai the Jew, and now the prime minister in the kingdom with tremendous power and influence, would insist on a feast with spiritual overtones and recognition of God's grace and power. This is especially true after a wondrous deliverance from impending death and destruction.

Indeed, according to Esther 9:30, Mordecai does speak peace to all his people in connection with the feast which he organized and ordered. And he did, according to this verse, speak truth to the Jews as well. But these facts must be viewed in light of the very name which he gave to the feast. That explains it all! The feast days were to be called the days of Purim. Now Purim is the plural for Pur. And Pur was the idol of the Medes and Persians. No, they probably would not say so openly. But Pur was the stone they trusted in to guide them in their decisions and lives. Haman cast Pur to pick that day of the thirteenth of the twelfth month for the execution of all the Jews in the kingdom. And it must be remembered that Israel had the Urim and Thummim which God commanded them to use, and through which He would speak to them and give them counsel. Of that you read, for example, in Numbers 27:21. But Haman was not seeking counsel from Jehovah for a day best suited for executing His people. Pur was his idol. And Mordecai calls the feast after that idol and commands all the Jews to do likewise. O, it could be done. They could, in faith, have named it The Days of Purim's Folly. Faith however would have cried out with Jonah after his salvation from death in the depth of the sea. "Salvation is of the Lord." You look in vain for any evidence that Esther and Mordecai ascribed this enlargement and deliverance to Jehovah. No, it was purely a carnal celebration.

Note, for this is revealing, as God Himself gives us the concluding remarks concerning Mordecai in chapter 10:3: "seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed." Seeking their spiritual well-being is not even suggested. In fact, what Mordecai seeks for his people is that which turns their minds and hearts away from God, not unto Him. Wealth makes man feel self-sufficient, not needing God. It fixes his mind on creation rather than on the Creator. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Jesus said that in His sermon on the mount, and we find it in Matthew 6:21. Social improvement, not spiritual, was Mordecai's aim. Material advancement, not spiritual growth was his goal. And all that fits in with calling them the days of Purim.

Faith would have moved him to urge his people to go back to the promised land where there is true wealth and peace, with God speaking peace to His people through His priests as they sacrificed the typical lamb and sent the people home with the rich message of being of good cheer, for their sins were forgiven. Christ they would find in the types and shadows in the promised land. That wealth, that peace which He brings did not interest Mordecai or Esther. His was a social gospel, another gospel than the one in Holy Writ, and is no gospel.

And what shall we say of all this? What purpose does this book serve? Why is it included in the canon of Scripture? And does it say anything to us today, with a view to the coming days of the Antichrist, when our "thirteenth of the twelfth month" arrives and we cannot buy or sell; and the two witnesses lie slain on the streets?

First of all, in this book we are shown by God that He is faithful to His promises. Jeremiah said it literally years before this event took place, "Great is Thy faithfulness." That we find at the end of Lamentations 3:23. And in the preceding verse he wrote, "It is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not." That unfailing mercy and compassion explains what happened and is recorded in this book of Esther. And His faithfulness to His promises comes out loudly and clearly.

Go back to the very first promise which He gave us, the one in Genesis 3:15, and out of whose womb, as the mother promise, all the promises that follow flow forth. There we are promised The Seed of the Woman Who will crush the head of all our enemies, as surely as Haman was hanged on the gallows he made for Mordecai. In covenant faithfulness God did not allow this seed of the serpent to succeed and prevent the birth of Him Who would give us amazing enlargement and deliverance unto glories eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, and that never entered into the heart of man.

The richness of that promise of Genesis 3:15 becomes plain as we turn the pages of Holy Writ. Far too numerous are all the details of that promise in the protevangel for us to list them. Every detail is fulfilled in God's faithfulness. And this book of Esther adds to the proof of that faithfulness. Because of what we read in it we can be sure, and in fact subsequent books of the Bible show us, that all of God's promises will be fulfilled to the minutest detail. Taking some broad steps, in order to conclude this series of articles on the book of Esther, we now can see that in Abraham, as God promised, all nations of the earth would be blessed. The Son to be given to us and Child to be born unto



us, Who would be, and is, now, the Prince of Peace, could and did come at the right time, and in the little town of Bethlehem as promised. The Stone cut out of the mountain without hands has already appeared on the scene and is rolling forward to grind to powder the antichristian nations of this earth (Daniel 2:45). The enemy at times may seem to be on the verge of victory; and the church may appear to be in grave danger. It may seem as though God has forgotten His church. But go to this book of Esther and be strengthened once again in the conviction that "His saints shall not fail, But over the earth their strength shall prevail," to quote from the Psalter versification of Psalm 149. And all this is true because God is faithful to His covenant promises.

In the second place, this book of Esther shows us that the Almighty has perfect control over all the creatures which He has made and brings forth. And for that reason, too, we can be sure that His promises will be fulfilled. He said in the mother promise, "I will . . . it shall." And He does, and it did, because every creature great and small, animate and inanimate, spiritual and material is constantly under His complete control. He does not fight to maintain His cause, even though the creature often tries to fight Him. He need not fight. He need but cease to give the next heartbeat. And when things get dark, as in this book, and it looks as though God's cause might suffer defeat, remember that He raised up a Haman, an Ahasuerus, an Esther, and a Mordecai to do what He has eternally planned must be done.

Did He not before He created the world, and in inscrutable wisdom, decide that the chaff would serve the wheat? That chaff for a time may flourish, take in all the rain and sunshine, become tall and sturdy, and all this long before the grain begins to make its appearance. In volume and size the grain nowhere begins to compare with that chaff. One would begin to say that the chaff takes an awful lot out of the soil, growing as it does to such great proportions. Yet it serves to bring forth the wheat. And we ought to look to the Creator Whose wisdom fashioned the whole plant to produce that small bit of precious grain. The Almighty God uses that chaff to produce our food. And we ought to see *Him* in the growth and power of the world that surrounds His church and is the chaff that serves the wheat. The book of Esther shows us that truth in connection with the truth that He is faithful to His promise.

His name is not used by any of the characters in the book. And yet that His name is near His wondrous works declare. The right people with the right natures are brought on the scene at the right

time to display before our eyes the truth that He is still on the throne, has all creatures in His hand, to get that kind of king on the throne and to give Esther the beauty that captured the queenship; to get Mordecai in the right place to overhear the plot to kill the king, and to give the king a sleepless night; to bring Haman into the king's court just after the records are read and the king learns that Mordecai was never rewarded for saving the king's life; to move the king to accept Esther, who appeared uncalled-for, even though thirty days had gone by during which her companionship was not wanted; to cause the king to be furious against his highly elevated prime minister, and to grant Esther her request that circumvented an unchangeable law; and to get seventy-five thousand enemies of the Jews killed, while the Jewish race was saved, and the seed of the woman is able to bring forth the Prince of Peace.

Enemies who plotted to prevent the Saviour's birth, enemies of these enemies who likewise had no love for that coming Son, Satan and Satan's tools, lots that are cast and sleepless nights, all came by His appointment and took place because of perfect, flawless control that realizes all the details of His eternal, unchangeable counsel. Yea, we can be sure of His faithfulness because this book shows us what absolute control He has to use the chaff to serve the wheat, the wicked to benefit the just, the unrighteous to serve the cause of the righteous.

And therefore in the third place this book was written and preserved and included in the canon of Holy Writ so that as we face the dark days when the Antichrist shall starve the elect by refusing to let them buy or sell, kill many outright, and seem to have destroyed Christ's kingdom, He will come back at just the right moment and bring us into the wedding feast of the Lamb, where we will enjoy peace with God, and have true and everlasting, heavenly, spiritual wealth and gladness, because we will be in The Promised Land with that Seed of the woman, Whose death was not defeat but victory for the church, so that she is everlastingly and completely free from the serpent and his seed.

The heathen rage and imagine a vain thing. He that sitteth in the heavens, instead of fighting them, laughs at them (Psalm 2:1-4). And He does so because He is using them, even when they seek to crush His people, so that all things without exception work together for their good. That the book of Esther teaches us. God never worries, because He knows what He is doing and what is going to happen. Through this book He says to us, "Trust Me. My faithfulness cannot and will not fail."



## ALL AROUND US

# Reports on Church Assemblies

Rev. G. Van Baren

Late spring and early summer months are the time most church assemblies meet in their broader gatherings. Several months have passed since these meetings were held — and reports have been appearing in the various church magazines.

The *Presbyterian Journal* reports on various of these gatherings. Its reports on the Orthodox Presbyterian Church appeared in the June 19 issue. Some of the decisions were:

The major issue — consideration of the PCA invitation — went as anticipated. Ecumenicity and Inter-Church Relations Committee, presented no recommendation at this time . . . This means that the OPC would vote on joining the PCA at its 1986 50th-anniversary general assembly before sending it to the presbyteries, two-thirds of which would need to approve before a final vote could take place at the 1987 general assembly at the earliest . . .

(There was a) vote by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church . . . to encourage a thorough revision of the *Trinity Hymnal* . . .

The hymnal has been widely credited with having introduced a new era of Biblical awareness in worship. But it has also been criticized for being too heavy for popular acceptance. One OPC church planter told the assembly here that he couldn't use the hymnbook as it is, because visitors to worship services were "turned off" by the music . . .

Some were surprised by a motion, which passed handily, asking the committee in charge to consider including in the new version all 150 of the Psalms, rather than the 70 or so in the current hymnal. The proposal was passed along as a suggestion, however, rather than an order from the assembly.

GCP hopes the revised book will be ready for purchase by mid-1987 . . .

. . . A motion was adopted to prepare a plan for future response to the crisis created by continued membership of the GKN in the RES, and to report to the 54th general assembly in 1987 . . .

Debate finally got heated up on the next-to-last day of the OPC assembly over the report of a Committee

on the Hermeneutics of Women in Ordained Office. The matter was recommitted to an enlarged committee, whose report next year is to include exegesis of significant Scripture passages.

The *Presbyterian Journal*, July 3, presents further a report of the Christian Reformed Church synod. Here, attention was focused on the question of ordaining women deacons. Last year the CRC synod approved such ordinations. This year's synod was flooded with protests against that decision. There was concern that this issue would split the CRC — and on the floor of synod there were expressions from delegates encouraging continued unity. Some of the *Journal's* report is as follows:

The pre-synod rumblings had threatened to split the denomination . . . Reports circulated that at least two churches — one in California and another in Michigan — have already broken ties. In debate during the synod meeting, such threats were not taken lightly.

"What we are talking about in this issue is the preservation of the Christian Reformed Church," said Rev. Roger Kok of Grandville, Mich., in a strong appeal for unity early in the debate. "We are brothers and sisters in Jesus. Let's not destroy our church."

Rev. Alvin H. Venema of Alberta, Canada, added, "This is not a matter that affects salvation, and it should never be allowed to drive us apart." . . .

With reports circulating that several CRC congregations are using women in "adjunct" roles as elders and deacons, synod declared such positions also to be in conflict with church order.

Miss Flikkema stated here, however, that she believes the CRC will eventually be asked to open all its offices to women. She said four CRC churches already have women serving as elders, and that others will follow. "I think the church will now get used to the idea of women as deacons. What we are doing is taking several small steps down the road to women in all offices."

The synod upheld the decision of last year. It dropped the "conscience clause," adopted last year, which gave pastors the option of not partici-



pating in a woman's ordination. The synod also declared that "only male members of the church shall be admitted to the offices of minister and elder."

Further CRC decisions as reported in the *Presbyterian Journal* were:

Last year, the Christian Reformed Church officially called apartheid a sin and any effort to defend apartheid theologically a heresy. This year, the CRC struggled with a proposal to break relations with the Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA) because of those churches' continuing unofficial practice of racial separation.

After three days of debate, the CRC synod rejected attempts to sever — or even to limit — such relations, and decided instead to maintain full ecclesiastical fellowship for the next four years . . .

. . . Mouw, although not involved in the debate here, said the decision to maintain relations was comparable to saying to a church that declared itself unitarian, "If you don't come around in four more years, we'll stop talking to you."

Some other decisions were:

The synod of the CRC has combined its two substantial international missions and relief agencies under a single Board of World ministries . . .

. . . Gave local churches the freedom to use liturgical dance in worship services, having in recent years eased a longtime ban on some forms of social dancing.

. . . Approved a new translation of the 17th century Belgic Confession, one of the official confessions of the church. The final version, the result of eight years' work, retains a disputed reference to "faithful person" instead of "faithful men" in a paragraph dealing with the offices in the church.

. . . Postponed a decision until 1988 on whether to join the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, a 110-year-old ecumenical fellowship . . .

The Presbyterian Church in America also met and dealt with various subjects that have concerned them in past years as well as new items on their agenda. The *Presbyterian Journal* reports on their on-going concerns about the sacraments:

One perennial problem was the issue of previous baptisms, and how they should be recognized by sessions of the PCA. If someone was baptized first by the

Roman Catholic Church, and only later discovered what saving faith was all about, was the first baptism valid? Or should that person be re-baptized?

And what if the first baptism was in a Protestant but theologically liberal setting? Is the answer different then?

Following the PCA's confessional stance that baptism is ordinarily a "once only" matter, the assembly here nevertheless adopted a statement saying that "local sessions are the best equipped, as well as being accountable under God, for judging whether the necessary criteria for valid baptism are present in a particular situation." . . .

A second issue received similar delay, although it hasn't been around as long. That was the matter of serving communion to children — a practice receiving advocacy by increasing numbers of PCA teaching and ruling elders, and being studied in other conservative Presbyterian denominations as well . . .

The PCA dealt with many other questions as well. It is moving towards a more delegated type of assembly. At present, each church can send its delegates to the assembly, which makes for a rather large group. The PCA expressed that, should the Orthodox Presbyterian Church join the PCA, this does not mean that the combined church will automatically join the Reformed Ecumenical Synod. The PCA is concerned about the membership of the GKN (Reformed Church in the Netherlands) in the RES.

The report in the *Journal* has a reference also to "the willingness of the PCA to study the teachings of Masonry with a view to taking further action." It appears that lodge membership is at least condoned in the PCA.

So these and other denominations have concluded their broader gatherings for another year. Much displeasure is evident — especially in the Christian Reformed Church with the issue of women serving as deacons. The issue of "receiving and joining" which involves the Presbyterian Church in America and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church will be worth following in future years. The struggle against the inroads of liberalism and modernism continues. So doubtlessly we will observe the difficulties and struggles within the churches even until Christ returns.

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## TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

### The Counsel of Peace (1)

Rev. Ronald Hanko

The idea that the covenant of God is an agreement or contract, first between God and Adam, now between God and His people in Christ, has prevailed in Reformed theology for many years. At the heart of this view of the covenant lies the teaching that there are always two parties who contract with one another in the establishment of the covenant. Until very recently, Zechariah 6:13 has been a key passage in defense of this view.

Most of those who teach a two-party covenant have understood, and rightly, that whatever the covenant may be, it must have an eternal pattern in God Himself. This is, of course, true of all God's works, but also of the covenant. God is never different in His revelation of Himself to us from what He is in Himself. All His works have not only their source but also their pattern in the being and life of God.

Those, then, who believe that the covenant is an agreement or contract, look for some kind of agreement in God Himself and in His own life which can be the eternal pattern of the covenantal agreement that He makes with His people. This agreement, so they say, would have demands, promises, and penalties, as any agreement or contract should have, and would have as its purpose the salvation of God's people. At one time, proof for such an eternal agreement within the Godhead was found in Zechariah 6:13 which speaks of "the counsel of peace" that "shall be between them both." This "counsel of peace," therefore, was interpreted as referring to an eternal agreement between the First and Second Persons of the Trinity, the Father and the Son, and demanded, with appropriate penalties, the incarnation and obedience of the Son, promising salvation to God's people.

In these studies it is not our purpose to discuss or defend one view of the covenant over against another, nor even to repeat all the arguments that have been raised against this interpretation of Zechariah 6:13. The fact is that even a superficial reading of the passage will show that this interpre-

tation has been "read into" the text, and that Zechariah 6:13 has nothing at all to do with the doctrine of the covenant. In recent years this has been conceded even by those who still teach the whole idea of a two-party covenant. Prof. L. Berkhof, an ardent defender of this view of the covenant, says for example, "Coccejus and others found in this passage a reference to an agreement between the Father and the Son. This was clearly a mistake . . ." (*Systematic Theology*, p. 266).

Nevertheless, because this passage has been so long misused and misinterpreted, almost all discussion of the passage has centered in either a defense or rejection of that older interpretation, and the positive teaching of the passage has been forgotten or neglected. This is not surprising, but is often the result of controversy over a passage of Scripture. It is to be especially regretted here, however, since the passage is the key first of all to a proper interpretation of the first six chapters of Zechariah's prophecy, and in the second place to a clear understanding of the offices of Christ in relation to His work as Mediator. To that positive teaching we wish to give our attention.

The prophecy of Zechariah, as we know, was addressed to the Jews after their return from captivity in Babylon, and the subject especially of the first six chapters is the rebuilding of the temple. This is clear not only from Zechariah 6:13 but also from Ezra 6:14. At that time the leaders of the Jews were the High-priest, Joshua, the son of Josedech, and Zerubbabel, a scion of the royal line of David, who ruled the people as governor in the name of the King of Persia.

In Zechariah 6:9-13 we have the climax and conclusion of all the preceding visions, particularly the vision of chapter 4. These verses are not themselves another vision, therefore, but record an incident that sheds light on the other visions of the first six chapters.

Three men, Jews of the captivity, had recently come from Babylon to Jerusalem with gifts of gold



and silver for the temple. Zechariah is commanded to go and meet the men before they have the opportunity to present these gifts in the temple. Zechariah must take the gifts himself, make from them a crown, and put the crown on the head of Joshua the High-priest. This action would be a sign to Joshua and all Israel concerning the building of the temple (cf. vss. 12, 13).

We must remember how very strange this command must have seemed to Zechariah and to the people who witnessed the sign. Never before in all their history had the High-priest worn the crown of the king, or the King the robes of the priest. The one man who had tried to assume both offices, King Uzziah of Judah, had been punished by God for his presumption with a terrible plague of leprosy. God had always insisted that the two offices of priest and king remain separate in Israel. The only one the Jews could remember who had borne both offices had been Melchizedek, the King of Jerusalem in the days of Abraham, but he was connected with their history only through his meeting of Abraham when Abraham returned from his victory over the armies of the five kings (Gen. 14:17-24).

Nevertheless, strange though the sign may have seemed to the people, it pointed to the necessity of the union of these two offices in connection with the building of the temple of God. In the case of Zerubbabel and Joshua this union was not complete, but was seen only very dimly in the co-operation that existed between them in the work of building the temple. This union did not mean that either of them had to give his rightful office to the other. Rather it meant that they must be one in zeal and purpose in rebuilding and maintaining God's house.

This co-operation was necessary first of all because only Zerubbabel as ruler had the authority and power to cause the work to continue. It was necessary in the second place because only through the work of Joshua as priest could the Lord dwell in the house as the God of His people. Thus we find in chapter 3 a special Word of God to Joshua as the one through whom the Lord will remove the iniquity of the land (3:7-9), and in chapter 4 to Zerubbabel as the one whose hand had laid the foundation, and who would also bring forth the headstone and finish the work (4:7-10).

Through their co-operation, therefore, the promises revealed and illustrated in the visions of chapters 1-5 would be fulfilled. The house would be built (1:16). God Himself would dwell in that house (2:10-11), and His presence would be the glory of that new-built house (2:5), though it was small and despised in the eyes of others (4:10). Thus also the fruit of God's presence would be

peace and prosperity for His people (3:9-10). The unity and co-operation of Joshua and Zerubbabel in their respective offices are, therefore, the typical, Old Testament fulfillment of the counsel of peace prophesied in Zechariah 6:13.

This was something that the people could understand. Their own history showed that the inevitable result of a lack of co-operation between priest and king was the neglect of the worship of God and ruin of the temple. When the king was wicked, then, no matter who was priest, the doors of the temple were shut, its treasures sold, and the building itself fell into disrepair (II Chron. 24:17, 28:24, etc.). When the priests did not fear God then all the authority and wealth of the rulers was not sufficient to maintain the true worship of God among the people and then also the temple was abandoned and ruined (Mal. 2:1-8). The "counsel of peace," therefore, was absolutely necessary for the spiritual well-being of the nation.

We must not forget, however, that all of this was only the typical fulfillment of this sign of the crowning of Joshua that God had given to Zechariah. That is immediately evident from the fact that the two offices were not personally united in one man, but remained separate and distinct. Joshua did not replace Zerubbabel as ruler when he was crowned, nor did he even continue to wear the crown. Rather, the crown, as a sign of a future and better unity between the offices of priest and king was placed in the temple for a memorial (6:14). And as long as these two offices were not united in one man, the possibility of disharmony and disunity always remained as a threat to the spiritual life of God's Old Testament people.

Zechariah is also commanded, then, in connection with this sign, to call the attention of Joshua and the people to one man who will be a priest upon the throne, who will both rule and bear the glory, whose name shall be The Branch. In Him the counsel of peace is fully revealed and the offices united forever. Because He is a priest upon the throne, He also shall be able to build a better temple than Joshua and Zerubbabel could ever build.

This man, The Branch, is of course our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom we read in Hebrews 8:1: "We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." He is a high-priest forever after the order of Melchizedek, for He is both King of peace and priest of the most high God (Heb. 7:1-3). Thus it is that both the glory of His Kingly office and the power of His priestly office are increased, the significance of His coming and work revealed, and the full wonder of our salvation made known for our comfort and for the glory of God.



## GUEST ARTICLE

## Participants — Not Spectators or How to Prepare for Worship

Rev. Barry L. Gritters

It probably will not strike us that we treat Sunday worship like watching a sporting event. But we do come, sometimes, to be entertained, rather than to worship; to see what we can get out of it, rather than to bring offerings of praise. And if we are not sufficiently entertained, we would almost be bold enough to complain as some would for a refund or a rain-delay check. Instead of being the active participants in the worship, we sit back and wait for a good show. When we worship, though, we are neither spectators nor are we sporting.

On the minister's head falls a horrible judgment if he is ill-prepared to lead God's congregation to Jehovah's presence in worship. His failure bears on the ability of the entire body to worship. On the other hand, even though parents' failure affects (probably) only them and (most likely) their children, we ought to give careful and deliberate consideration to how we prepare to enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise.

Standing before the Almighty God is not a light matter. Since God is King and we are His lowly subjects (though we *do* have the right to approach Him), we ought to consider how we come before His presence and enter His gates. The fathers of the Westminster Confession said worship preparation was so important that without "a due preparing of their heart, and ordering of their common affairs before-hand," Sunday could not be kept holy. Queen Esther herself feared for her life at the thought of approaching Ahasuerus without the proper conditions fulfilled. Would that we worshiped God, without fear, surely, but with such contemplation and forethought.

Preparation for worship begins already on Monday morning. We teach our children to look forward to worship. When they learn that Sunday is the *beginning* of the week instead of the *end*; when they learn that Sunday has the power to keep us go-

ing through this desert land, where all the streams are dry; then they will begin to look forward to Sunday as a day of rest and enrichment, instead of dreading it as a day to be done with so they can be on with the "good part" of the week.

A commendable way a Christian can begin teaching His children to prepare for Sunday already in the beginning of the week is to talk about the sermons. Fathers and husbands, discuss with your children and wife how the sermon applies to your lives. Sing with them that God's word is a light for their path, and then put it in concrete for them. Give them plain and practical examples. If one thinks that all he need do with his children is bring them to church and teach them to sit still, he is gravely mistaken.

A timetable for discussing the sermons with children or spouse might be: the sermon of the *past* Sunday could be discussed for the first three days of the week, and the *next* Sunday's for the last three days. Because we have sermons from the Heidelberg Catechism each week, because we have sermon texts and topics on bulletins, and because our pastors often preach series of sermons, we are not ignorant what Word will be brought next Sunday. In that way we come "primed" for worship, and able to use our full potential of strength in God's house.

One can prepare for the next Sunday by reading. By some, *Triple Knowledge* — the commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism — is read with great profit before the Lord's Day. Having our hearts and our minds on spiritual things through the week makes them more eager to hear the word on the Sabbath. Any good reformed literature will work in us an appetite for good, meaty preaching of the Word.

One of the most important times to prepare for worship, though, is Saturday night. Then, more



than any other time, our hearts and minds can be brought into the proper frame of mind to worship the next day. When a student looks ahead to a major exam, he makes a concerted effort not to be out late the night before. Only in that way can he be alert and on his toes at 8 AM.

Saturday evenings ought to be spent in quiet meditation, at home. It would be a good time to have a "family night" when all are at home, sitting around God's Word, speaking and singing of the morrow when God will be speaking. Many Saturday nights are spent by Christians in restaurants or visits till the late hours of the night, with the sorry result that they are chasing sleep instead of holiness the next morning. O, if God's people were only awake to the fact that not only the preacher sees them with their heads hanging.

On Sunday morning we have good opportunity to dress our souls as well as our bodies. Waking on time and being active is a profitable way to "put on our best." Though it is true that most people are usually active and not accustomed to sitting still first thing in the morning, one of the best remedies for that is to get a good night of sleep, wake early, eat and read, and maybe take a nice walk to enjoy the beauties of the morning.

Sitting in church before the worship also gives us a good time to prepare. That means that we ought to come to church ON TIME. Last minute rushes into church make for temptation to read the bulletin when we ought to be listening to the law or giving alms. Hasty entrance into the house of God makes for a frame of mind ill-befitting a call to praise. An early start makes for proper meditation before the consistory enters. And meditation is what the time prior to worship is for. That raises two important thoughts.

First, the organist or pianist has a wonderful opportunity (a difficult and weighty responsibility as well) to help God's people advance their hearts to the feet of Christ. We don't think of organists very often in that sense, nor do we appreciate their work sufficiently. But they are vital in making or breaking our preparation. In my mind, there are at least two essential criteria for a successful (in the right sense) prelude. One, the organist must give God's people a sense of God. That might seem a bit ethereal, but that is just the idea. It means that we must be brought into humble adoration of the greatness and glory of our God. Anything less than that is insufficient. Second, therefore, good organists do not call attention to themselves or their playing. When a worshiper enters God's house ready to worship, he needs to think about God. And the way to that frame of mind is not by thinking about the organ or organist, but by having the piano

or organ artfully lead him to meditation about worship. Pray for your organist.

Second, being in the proper frame of mind, we can bring our needs to the One Who demands to be worshiped in Spirit and Truth. Pray for the worship service, that your minister might preach the Word to cut you to the quick. Pray that you might be able to sing the songs of Zion from the heart, with spiritual maturity. Seek earnestly the spirit of II Corinthians 9:7 so that your offerings might be given properly. Beseech God to give you ears, eyes, and minds big enough to take in the Word brought. Pray that He will lift from you the spirit of weariness. Ask that all your earthly concerns might be left outside of God's house. And make it your central petition that God's name might be praised in all your actions in church.

If the consistory desires and expects that kind of prayer from the congregation, then the elders, deacons, and minister must prepare as well. Preparation for worship also involves the consistory room. It happens that the consistory members converse of things — just minutes before they enter the worship service — at which they would be shocked if they heard them from the members in the sanctuary. Just as much as all God's people need to be reverent and holy before the worship, so should the discussion in the consistory room be sanctified and circumspect. And not only is this necessary for the consistory as members, but the spiritual atmosphere in the consistory room can make a world of difference in the ability of the minister to lead the congregation in proper and reverent worship.

If all this sounds ideal, it only shows how far we are, or have gone, from properly keeping the Sabbath day holy, from bringing our hearts and minds into subjection to the Father of true worship.

Worship is for the praise of God. Failure to be prepared is serious for our ability to glorify Him. It is also for our spiritual benefit. And there is a directly proportional relationship between preparation and profit — between readiness and ability to receive grace. All other things being equal, the more carefully and deliberately we prepare, the greater the benefit and the richer the grace received. The less we concentrate on worship, especially from Saturday evening until the consistory enters, the more quickly the dew of heaven will run off our hard and dry hearts. "Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy" means more than the 24 hours from Saturday midnight to Monday morning. It means all involved in preparing for worship.

Failure to prepare is what makes us most dissatisfied with our worship as we have it now. It more than anything else makes us cry out for change in



worship, because we are tired of the same old "game." Instead of being spectators, or coming for sport, come to church next Lord's Day with a heart that longs and thirsts for the Water of Life. Enter in-

to His courts with prepared thanksgiving, and into His courts ready to praise Him from Whom all blessings flow.

## IN HIS FEAR

# The Christian Family: The Role of the Wife and Mother

*Pastor Arie den Hartog*

The Lord Himself in His wise and wonderful purpose has ordained the place of each member of the Christian family. This was a creation ordinance and not one that is subject to change as culture and tradition among men changes. This will work for the good and blessing of the Christian home. That this is also the case for the role of the wife and mother in the home is abundantly clear from what Paul tells us in passages such as I Corinthians 11 and 14 and I Timothy 2. Repeatedly the apostle grounds his exhortations to women in God's creation ordinance. The apostle does not speak merely as a man of his times, much less as some sort of male chauvinist or unsympathetic bachelor as many today claim. He speaks by the inspiration of the Spirit of the Lord and gives timeless principles which apply to every age.

The Lord created the woman after His own image even as He created the man after His own image (Genesis 1:27). She is therefore in no sense a lower form of being than the man. God created woman a very glorious and wonderful creature, as the account of Genesis 2 also suggests. He carefully formed and made her with His own hands as His beautiful handiwork.

The Lord created woman in a certain order in relationship to the man. He created man first and He formed woman out of the man. Modern man and woman may scoff at and ridicule this story of creation. As Christian we believe that this is the literal, historical record of the creation of woman. Furthermore we believe that it is of the greatest significance for the place of the woman in the Christian home today.

When the Lord created man and woman and united them together in the first and most beautiful marriage of history, He bound them together as one flesh. He commanded that the husband and wife should love one another and live with one another in faithfulness in their respective roles as husband and wife. The love which unites the Christian husband and wife together is much deeper than mere physical and romantic attraction. It is the love of God in Christ which He works in their hearts through His Holy Spirit.

So also in marriage and the home the Lord commands the woman to love her husband and her children (Titus 2:4). This is basic. Without that, Christian marriage and home are impossible. True Christian love is in essence selfless giving of oneself to another. Our Lord is the supreme example of this. He gave Himself to the death of the cross for the salvation of His people. In Ephesians 5 the apostle Paul commands the husband to love his wife with such love. The husband must give himself for his wife. It is not true as some imagine that marriage for the man requires, ideally, less self-sacrifice than for the woman simply because he is the head of the woman. It is also fundamental that the woman as wife and mother sacrifice herself in love for her husband and family. It is very obvious that the fundamental reason of all the rebellion of modern-day women is because of their refusal to give themselves in selfless love as God commands. This is due to the woman's fallen and corrupt nature. We ought not to call this women's liberation but rather women's rebellion. It is very obvious that the modern-day woman of the world



seeks only herself, her own vain glory, and the satisfaction of her depraved lusts. The Christian woman who loves the Lord must be radically different from the world in this fundamental way: that she loves her husband and family with the love of God in Christ.

God created the woman to be the helpmeet of the man. This is a very beautiful truth. God created woman in such a way that she is able in every way to complement the man. She is able to help him in a most wonderful way and to fulfill his deepest needs. This does not mean that God made her simply the servant and slave of man who must kowtow to his every whim and fancy and every selfish demand. It does mean however that she must, in love, voluntarily and obediently from the heart serve her husband. The husband and wife in marriage have one calling before the Lord. The wife must serve her husband to assist him in fulfilling that calling. She must be his close companion, living with him in the covenant of marriage to encourage and support him in the whole of life.

Everywhere the Word of God commands the wife in marriage to live in submission and obedience to her husband. It is simply a fact that this is the chief admonition that scripture gives to the woman. (See Ephesians 5, Colossians 3:18, I Timothy 2:11, Titus 2:5, I Peter 3:1-6, and I Corinthians 11.) It takes a lot of twisting of the scriptures to get rid of this teaching, as many women (and men) who call themselves Christians attempt to do. The Bible very plainly teaches that God created the man to be the head of the woman. He has God-given authority over her; and the woman must be subject to that authority with obedience from the heart.

Scripture also urges the woman to live in godly sobriety, meekness, and chastity. The Lord emphasizes this especially in commanding the woman — not because this is not also important for the man, but rather because it is true that the world is full of unchaste rebellious women who live in lust and pleasure, and who are the furthest thing imaginable from sobriety and meekness. The Christian woman knows the seriousness of her calling before the Lord and does not make herself drunk with the world's ungodly philosophy and manner of living. She seeks not herself but the glory of God and the welfare of her husband and family.

The Lord in His providence has given to the woman in marriage a special role in child bearing and a special calling to raise the children the Lord gives to her and her husband in the love and fear of the Lord. It remains a fact that this is the most amazing and wonderful role imaginable. How true this is especially when we remember how God

realizes His gracious covenant in the line of continued generations. What can be more wonderful for any human being than to bring forth the children of God? Who can ascend to greater heights in God's purpose than to be used of Him as the woman was even to bring forth the Lord Jesus Christ into the world.

The apostle Paul speaking by the inspiration of the Lord and as the servant of the Lord says in I Timothy 5:14, "I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully." And again he says in Titus 2:4 and 5, "That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed." These are plain words — so plain that even a child can understand them. It does not take a committee of professional theologians to discover the hermeneutical principles before these words can be properly understood. In these and similar passages of scripture the Word of God emphasizes that the role of woman is especially in the home. There especially she serves as the helpmeet of her husband. There especially she cares for her children. She has no greater and more glorious role than this. There is none.

The raising of children absolutely requires that the woman is full time in the home. We want to address this question further in a later article. The reasoning of the world on this is foolish wickedness. The suggestion that all that matters is quality of time and not quantity is ridiculous nonsense. Children need the full-time loving care and concern of mother in the home. God made it that way. Not all the fabricated and slanted studies of the world's psychologists and family counselors will disprove this. Those mothers who imagine that they can have their own careers outside of the home and juggle this with trying to raise a family will some day reap the consequences. These consequences will be most serious for the Christian home, especially if it is in terms of the spiritual welfare of the children and the decline of the future generations of the church of Jesus Christ.

The role that God has given to the woman as wife and mother is a rich and fulfilling one. Here again we have to oppose the modern-day teaching that suggests that the God-ordained role of woman relegates her to menial labor and drudgery where it will be forever impossible for her to realize her full potential. If God Himself gave woman her role in the family we can be sure that it is not one in which she can find no fulfillment and joy. We challenge any man to come forward to name one gift and



talent that God has given to woman which cannot be properly used in the home and for the family. In fulfilling her role, the godly woman has a very significant place in the kingdom and church of God. Surely the classic passage of scripture that proves this is the beautiful passage on the virtuous woman found in Proverbs 31. Both women and men ought to read this passage several times each year and meditate on its meaning. That would help a great deal to drive out of their minds any imagination that the role of woman as God has ordained it is a lowly and unfulfilling one. The chief requirements for fulfillment for the Christian woman in the home and family are loving devotion, self sacrifice, and obedience to the Lord in her God-given role.

Everywhere the scriptures honor the godly woman in the role God has given her. It is not the glamorous career woman that is the honorable woman in God's sight. It is not the vain adulterous Hollywood and Broadway star. It is the truly virtuous woman. She is precious in the sight of the Lord. Let all Christian women know that. What can be more wonderful than to be precious in the sight of the Lord? "Her children arise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favor is deceitful, and beauty is

vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised" (Proverbs 31:28-30). What wonderful words these are! What woman can ask for a greater reward than this?

Let us conclude this article with a word to husbands. Godly wives and mothers need to be properly honored in our day. The whole world is despising and demeaning them, ridiculing them and calling them to free themselves from bondage and go out into the world to find a "meaningful and honorable career." Do we as husbands realize the barrage from the worldly media that our wives have to face on every hand that propagates this kind of thing? We must truly honor and respect and love our wives and mothers. They need a lot of encouragement and support in our day. How urgent it is that we not neglect our wives and suggest by our actions and attitudes that we consider them to be very unworthy and nothing but domestic servants. We must not make their role drudgery by being unloving and unsupportive. We must not leave them with the very difficult task of bringing up the children without our leadership and support. If we do these things we are contributing to the breakdown of our Christian home. Love and honor your faithful wife and the mother of your children as the word of the Lord commands you to do.

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## Book Review

**SOLVING MARRIAGE PROBLEMS**, by Jay E. Adams; Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1983; 122 pp., (paper) \$4.50. (Reviewed by Prof. R.D. Decker)

Still another book from the pen of Jay Adams, Director of Advanced Studies at Westminster Theological Seminary in California! This book is intended for pastors and other Christian counselors, but may be profitably read by any Christian. One does not always agree with Adams' views, especially his view of divorce and the remarriage of divorced persons. Nonetheless, Adams' approach is Biblical and he insists that marriage problems are caused by sin and can be cured only by grace through the means of God's Word. Some of the subjects with which Adams deals are: The Counselor's Own Marriage, What Causes Marriage Problems, Unbiblical Concepts in Marriage, Particular Sinful Living Patterns, How To Discover Marriage Problems. Recommended for pastors and elders especially.

## News From Our Churches

August 28, 1985

If you have a copy of this year's *Acts and Yearbook of Synod*, please make the following change on page 143: Rev. Kortering's telephone number should read — (616) 538-2575. This will greatly reduce the number of telephone calls to the person at the 2572 telephone number.

Rev. Bruinsma and family have been visiting the Grand Rapids, Michigan area for a few weeks. In a letter to the congregation of First Church, in Grand Rapids, Rev. Bruinsma wrote, "... First of all, the congregation in Waterworks has had a new beginning ... Since there was no available building in

this district the remaining deacon and the faithful decided to purchase a little 8' by 10' shop and then expand on it as funds came in. The first Sunday scheduled for services arrived and I was a little doubtful that many would come. To my surprise about 50 people attended church that night. About 30 crammed into the little shanty and another 20 hung in the windows and doors. I'm sure many of these were just curious on-lookers, but for 3 Sundays now we have been drawing the same people. Because of this response the members of this congregation are now expanding the building to a large



12' by 16'. They are having a hard time financing their building (total cost \$600.00, U.S.) but they are enthused and determined to make a go of it. I have been spending much time preaching in this church and I hope to begin a Bible study class there soon, too!

"A further item of news is that I have made contacts with a few people outside the confines of our own churches here. I have met with two men from Kingston (Jamaica's capital) who have quite an interest in Calvinism. I intend to keep in touch with them in hopes of a future labor in Kingston . . ."

In regards to the missionary work in Jamaica, and in accordance with the decision of the last Synod that a co-worker be found for Rev. Bruinsma by October 1 or else he would be called home and made eligible for a call, the Jamaican Committee has contacted other ministers as to their willingness and ability to labor on the field. Since no one could go this year, the consistory of First Church has released their pastor for this work and the Council will send Rev. Joostens to labor in Jamaica with Rev. Bruinsma for six months beginning October 1. Prof. Decker has agreed to preach the Heidelberg Catechism for First Church and Rev. Lubbers has agreed to teach Rev. Joostens' catechism classes.

Rev. and Mrs. Lubbers are in the Houston, Texas

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On August 23, 1985, our parents, MR. AND MRS. HENRY ZANDSTRA celebrated their 45th wedding anniversary. We are thankful to them for raising us in the fear of Jehovah. Our prayer is that our Heavenly Father will bless them in the last years of their lives with spiritual strength through walking in His way.

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28)

Albert and Jean Buitert  
Dave and Cheryl Dotson,  
and Karen Buitert  
Henry and Joann Zandstra  
Steve, Ryan, Laura and Amber  
Chester Jr. and Barb Hunter

Art and Sharon Van Baren  
Art, Mary, Michelle, Neal  
Steve and Cynthia Dees  
Jason, Erin and Andrew

### ANNIVERSARY IN MINISTRY

September, 1985, marks 25 years that the Lord has sustained our father, REV. J. KORTERING, in the service of our Protestant Reformed Churches. For many of these years he has been *our* pastor as well. We thank God that His covenant blessings have been with our father, and pray that God will use him (and our mother as his helpmeet) for many years to come.

"Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever." (I Timothy 1:17)

Barry and Lori Gritters  
Dennis and Sharon Griess  
Bruce Klamer and Joann Kortering  
Leon Kamps and Ellen Kortering  
Carol Kortering  
and 6 grandchildren

area in order that Rev. Lubbers might preach in our Trinity Protestant Reformed Church for the first four Sundays of September.

Our seminary has two new pre-sem students and four returning students who will be graduating, D.V., this year. We pray that God will add new students in the near future.

The Bookstore reports growing interest in this adventure. Though there are some slow days, others have been busy. A number of our own publications have been sold to many who are not members of our denomination. If you have not been to the store, your visits will be appreciated.

All of our schools have opened for the year. Heritage School in Hudsonville, Michigan, has also opened its new doors for the school year. In addition, Heritage will also have an exciting event take place on September 19, at the school. This scheduled date is for the cornerstone laying and dedication service of the school.

The teachers will hold their convention in Doon, Iowa this year from October 16-18.

The Federation Board of Protestant Reformed School Societies sponsored an exciting mini-course this summer on "Writing Across the Curriculum." The enthusiasm of the speakers and the active teacher participation was an evidence of the sincere desire to improve the instruction of our children.

DH

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On October 1, 1985, the Lord willing, our parents, MR. AND MRS. ALVIN RAU will celebrate their 35th wedding anniversary. We, their children and grandchildren rejoice with them and are grateful to our Lord for covenant parents who sought to teach us the way of God. We pray they will continue to experience the blessings of our faithful God in the years that He may give them.

"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children." (Psalm 103:17)

Jim and Lois Rau	Dave and Norma Rau
Carol, Cheryl, Kim, Rodney	Dawn
Rev. Ken and Pat Koole	Mike Rau
Justin, Bruce, Catherine, Audra	Rosemary Rau
Dave and Mary Kregel	
Lisa, Brent, Jason	

### NOTICE!!! CHANGE OF ADDRESS

The new mailing address of Rev. Arie den Hartog is:  
Rev. Arie den Hartog  
43 Blair Road  
Singapore 0208  
Republic of Singapore